



# Part 3

3.3

Advocacy Tool 7

How to formulate enabling environment reforms

## Section 3.3: Advocacy Tools Coalition Building

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### Purpose

Coalitions of business interests are one effective way for the EOs to realize policy goals. However, they carry risks as well as opportunities. This tool provides a step by step approach for EOs considering entering into a coalition.



### How to use this tool

This Assessment Tool is designed for use by EOs. It is best used as a guide for employers and enterprise development specialists who will facilitate the assessment process with the EO and among other actors.

**Step 1:** What is a business coalition?

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**Step 2:** Why enter a coalition?

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**Step 3:** Managing coalition partners

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**Step 4:** Coalition communication strategies

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## Step 1: What is a business coalition?

There are many ways that business and like minded groups can work together toward realizing a shared vision and attaining common goals. They can share information, organize joint activities. Building coalitions is one effective way of achieving common objectives.

### 1.1 Defining Coalitions

Coalitions are structures of formal collaboration underwritten by a common vision. Formed to carry out joint or coordinated activities, coalitions can either be a time-bound or open-ended partnering to achieve a common purpose.<sup>1</sup>

The return to significant investments of time and energy is the higher likelihood of successful and sustainable reform efforts.

Coalitions are able to mitigate challenges by providing a shared platform for likeminded individuals and groups, leveraging the collective force of their members and influential allies, focusing the public spotlight on advocacy issues in the public arena, and applying pressure among leadership circles, within bureaucratic environments, and in the larger public sphere, toward the effective and sustainable implementation of reform.

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<sup>1</sup> Cohen, De la Vega and Watson: *Advocacy For Social Justice: A Global Action And Reflection Guide*, 2001.

## 1.2 How are coalitions formed?

Structured and formal collaboration allow business organizations to combine resources and, by acting in concert, increase the power of their voices in the public sphere to effect positive change.

There are some essential steps to coalition building that can be carried out in different sequences. The following coalition-building stages do not comprise a comprehensive nor prescriptive list. That said, to increase the likelihood of success of initiatives, it is imperative that EOs take stock of the ways in which the coalitions they have been involved in previously were successfully built and made sustainable or not, as the case may be. Drawing on a wide range of sources from the fields of leadership, communication, negotiation, and development, coalitions are formed and strengthened through the following stages:<sup>2</sup>

- *Issue Identification and Specification:* the overall objective of the problem is articulated and broken down for detailed analysis; policy options are then defined in terms of minimum to maximum positions that particular stakeholders may either support or find unpalatable.
- *Relationship/Stakeholder Mapping:* significant actors are identified, positions toward key and related issues are plotted.
- *Forming Core Membership:* the core of a coalition becomes convinced and is self-aware of the benefits of change; core actors are organized, early leaders and champions are identified, and the joint agenda takes shape.
- *Demonstrating Credibility:* coalition demonstrates it is knowledgeable about relevant issues, can act effectively, and is worthy of support from stakeholders.

## Step 2 Why enter a coalition

Building formal or informal relationships with other business organizations, including businesswomen's associations, can often enhance the EO's ability to reach its objectives.

A coalition structure can also provide protection to some members. For example, one member can take the lead while others who perceive risks from active advocacy can keep a lower profile.

Coalitions often serve another important function, which is helping different business organizations agree on their positions before approaching their target audiences.

When policy-makers hear too many competing or confused messages about a particular issue, they may decide that there is no consensus in the business community, and that therefore taking action is premature. Thus, coalitions can become an important forum for settling difficult issues in private, enabling business groups to present a united position to policy makers.

Coalition strategies can be vital for strengthening the EO's capacity for political analysis, for increasing the likelihood of success of an advocacy initiative, and for building the capacity of local groups to advance their policy interests.

## 2.1 Advantages include:

- Increases resources, experience, credibility and visibility.

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<sup>2</sup> Communication for Governance and Accountability Program: "Coalition Building, 2008

- Increases the likelihood of successful policy change.
- Develops the advocacy capacity of less experienced coalition members.
- Provides assurance to coalition members who have concerns for advocating on their own.
- Provides an element of protection or “safety in numbers.”
- *Scale*: Mobilising more voices in support of the EO’s policy goal.
- *Expertise*: Different organizations and actors can bring extra resources and knowledge, and more individuals who have an understanding of the issue.
- *Unity*: building the business community around an issue sends government a strong message.
- *Focus*: by definition, a coalition should avoid duplication of policy efforts by the business community.
- *Profile*: Opportunity to raise members’ public profiles (the activities of a coalition are likely to receive more media attention than those of any individual organization).
- *Opportunity for permanent partnership*: they can lead to greater partnerships amongst the business community on other issues and pave the way for agreement on more difficult policy areas.
- *Diverse action*: A coalition can fight on more fronts than one single organization working alone.

Coalitions are not always the best strategy for advocacy. Most EO advocacy work will be done quietly in meetings with officials, and presenting views and perspectives - the classic “quiet approach”. A coalition is often seen as a more forthright public approach – a thus a more ‘loud approach’. In many cases this is true, but a coalition of business interests can also be a collaborative exercise that continues with the same “quiet approach” but with the added credibility of more support and resources behind the effort.

Coalitions, in order to be effective, require agreement on objectives. They can fail because there is a lack of consensus on strategy, purpose, or how to share credit (and blame) for the coalition’s actions.

Because coalitions have a consensus-building function, they also take time. Reaching agreement on an overall strategy, as well as specific decisions can be time-consuming and sometimes frustrating. Finally, coalitions generally require solid leadership: without leadership, coalitions can fall apart.

## 2.2 Disadvantages include:<sup>3</sup>

- *Consensus is hard*: more voices, more opinions and more interests can make agreement is harder.
- *Reputational risk*: If one member of the coalition behaves badly, all may be tarnished.
- *Credit, as well as blame*: both get shared.
- *Decision-making must be shared*: Some organizations have by-laws or Board structures that make it hard to submit to group decision-making.
- *A coalition is only as strong as its weakest link*: Each member organization will have different levels of resources and experience, as well as different internal problems.
- *Balancing interests can be problematic*: Different coalition partners can have vastly different approaches to an issue. For example an SME group may advocate a radical and confrontational approach, while others may prefer more subtle approaches cognizant of the need to preserve longer-term relationships.

<sup>3</sup> Business Advocacy Network: *Advocacy Awareness Handbook*, 2008.

## Step 3: Managing coalition partners

The point of departure for effective coalition building is twofold. The first is for the EO and all potential members to agree on the purpose of having the coalition in the first place. The second is that each of the organizations involved must be willing to make compromises. Without these last two elements, a coalition is unlikely to last long.

But before other business organizations will compromise, they must have confidence in the other members. Just like in any organization, strong relationships are needed to sustain complex discussions and sometimes difficult decisions.

Sometimes the most challenging part of a coalition is agreeing on the goals. However, the more consensus that can be achieved, the more effective a coalition's advocacy will be.

A coalition can be slowed down when its members become too focused on who will receive publicity, credit, or blame for its work. Early on, agree on procedures that will allow all members to participate and share in any public benefits that result from the coalition's activities.

With multiple organizations involved, it can become tempting to move in many different directions. Coalition members should constantly remind themselves why they are together and what forms their common advocacy agenda.

Create roles and leadership responsibilities. Provide opportunities for members to change roles over time.

Coalition members must enjoy a level of trust that will enable the ceding of a significant amount of autonomy, i.e. in sharing resources and decision making power. At the same time, each member's access to relevant policy networks and interested publics should be leveraged toward increasing the scope and influence of the coalition. It is toward building trust and managing diversity that effective communication is critical.

Part of managing stakeholder relationships is keeping track of who is speaking on the proposal's behalf and what is being said by whom in the coalition. Risks that will need to be actively managed include:

- Disclosure of information that is inconsistent with that disseminated by the EO;
- raising of false expectations about the proposals benefits (e.g., employment opportunities);
- making commitments on behalf of the coalition without having obtained prior agreement.

## PARTNER ASSESSMENT MATRIX<sup>4</sup>

Intermediary	Mandate	Membership type and size	Strengths and accomplishments	Weaknesses	Relationship with EO	Scope for partnership
Manufacturers association	Represent manufacturers in policy discussions. Provide training services, advice on setting up companies.	Voluntary. 720 businesses are members, representing 32,000 employees.	Some strong policy contributions to government Particularly around tax policy with notable success in recent years.	Narrow membership based around the automotive industry and in one city. Foreign investors are ineligible for Membership.	Has been close to the EO in the past on issues, many dual members, but also some personality issues with have clouded potential for cooperation	GREEN
Chamber of Commerce	“Organize, represent and promote the country's private sector interests.”	Compulsory. All businesses with more than 10 employees must join.	Existing membership gives it the potential to reach all businesses. Legal mandate gives it close links with government, which could be capitalized on.	Widely seen by its members as corrupt, ineffective and not democratic.	They are a member of the EO but cooperation is very limited	AMBER

### Step 4: Coalition communication strategies

Coalition building requires tackling a complex array of challenges, one of which is getting the communication dimension right.

Effective communication efforts in support of coalition-building help secure, strengthen, and sustain political will at various bureaucratic levels. Effective communication needs to be deployed in different combinations and sequences, depending on the needs and stages of formation of particular coalitions.

While the contributions of communication to coalition-building in support of reform are multi-faceted, successful efforts from around the world suggest that these initiatives can be boiled down to two categories: communication efforts that either **build trust**, especially during early formative stages, and **leverage diversity**, to make the most of a coalition's broad membership. Finding a balance between trust and diversity which exert pressure in opposite directions, much like centripetal and centrifugal forces, strengthens a coalition's orbital rotation around a particular issue, and enhances its influence in the public sphere.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Benjamin Herzberg and Andrew Wright: *The PPD Handbook: A Toolkit for Business Environment Reformers* (DFID, World Bank, IFC, OECD Development Center) p. 35.

<sup>5</sup> Public Interest Coalitions The Public Sphere Trust Building Activities Leveraging Diversity.

## COALITION CHECKLIST

- ✓ How could the advocacy issue be reformulated to enlarge the scope for a larger coalition of business groups?
- ✓ Is there strong consensus on the purpose, advocacy strategy, and approach among members and potential members?
- ✓ What should be the major message to potential coalition partners?
- ✓ What would be the role of the most influential personalities (from different potential partner organizations)? What implications would this have for the overall approach? Are there individuals who could distort the core message (through conflicts of interest or through association with other (negative) issues)?
- ✓ Does the EO have specific “asks” or demands of potential new partners?
- ✓ Has the EO assessed the reliability of potential new partners, including of businesswomen’s associations and women’s groups?
- ✓ Do the other business member organizations who would be coalition partners have a good reputation? Will an association with any of them hurt you in the eyes of your target audience?
- ✓ Do the member organizations of the coalition have good working relationships? Is there a history of solid collaboration?
- ✓ Does the coalition have the resources it needs to carry out its agenda? What kind of resource commitment is required of the EO?
- ✓ What role would the EO assume in the coalition?
- ✓ How will information be distributed to coalition members?
- ✓ Does the coalition provide opportunities for leadership development among members?
- ✓ In some countries, other business associations (e.g. chambers of commerce) are under the direct or indirect control of the government. Will including such organizations affect the ‘independent image’ of the EO’s campaign?
- ✓ How will the nature of the advocacy campaign be altered depending on who engages in the activity? Such as objectives, resources and access.